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ADDRESS

OF FARMINGTON QUARTERLY MEETING (NEW YORK) TO THE MONTHLY MEETINGS CONSTITUTING IT, AND TO THE MEMBERS OF THE SAME GENERALLY.

"*Are there not at this moment Slaves toiling for us.*"

PUBLISHED BY
THE MANAGERS OF THE FREE PRODUCE ASSOCIATION OF FRIENDS OF OHIO YEARLY MEETING.
1850.

One of the most vital testimonies taught by the Christian Religion, and which the Society of Friends have always considered of distinguished importance, is not to partake of nor countenance the sins of the people among whom we live. Heavy judgments were, of old, pronounced on the children of Israel who did so; and as they had received more light than other nations, their transgressions were more inexcusable. He that knew the Lord's will, and did it not, was to be beaten with many stripes. Even Tyre and Sidon were to be less severely judged than some cities enjoying the priviledges of the knowledge of true religion.

The sin of enslaving immortal beings, and reducing them, as far as practicable, to the level of brutes, exists now in our country, to a degree and extent, rarely known among the most cruel nations of the earth; and its spirit pervades, more or less, the whole land. It was against this sin, that the Society of Friends were long since called to bear a faithful testimony, even to the excluding of all from membership who were guilty of it, under whatever specious pretence or alleged motives, or whatever apparent kindness might be shown to its victims. This testimony, so long and so repeatedly borne, has been the means of creating in the minds of most of our members, in some degree, a just abhorrence of this dreadful iniquity.

The members of the Society of Friends, who formerly held slaves, it is believed, treated them in general with comparative lenity. But this was by no means considered an excuse for the sin. A most solemn question to us now arises: Are there not, at this moment, slaves toiling for us under the infliction of cruelties far greater than any of our members were ever guilty of? Are we not directly hiring oppression by purchasing its fruits? Are we not giving the slaveholder and

overseer, the pay for which, chiefly, all this wrong and iniquity are commited! The original motive to slavery was the hope of gain,—the desire to obtain the profits of hard labor without paying for it, "keeping back the hire of the laborer by fraud." This is still the chief object in view, especially in those parts of the United States, where it exists in its severest forms. What greater encouragement, then, can we give it, than by paying the master, and thus directly inciting this motive! If one person were knowningly the sole purchaser of all the productions of slavery, would he not be guilty as well as the slaveholder? How then, can we avoid the sin, because many are the purchasers with us?

The Society of Friends has forbidden its members to deal in prize goods,—obtained by the plunder of vessels in war. Slavelabor goods are obtained not less fraudlently, accompanied with the commission of no less enormittes. Those who are robbed at sea, are deprived of their property only, their lives being rarely endangered, except in case of resistance; but the slaves are not only robbed of their earnings through life, but of their liberty, their families, and so far as can be done, of their hopes; and resistance is nearly always punished with cruel death. The far greater prevalence of Slavery, and of its fruits which are everywhere around us, should urge us the more earnestly, to endeavor to avoid those fruits on all occasions. And as objections and difficulties are not admited in excuse, in the case of prize goods, neither should we suffer them to deter us in ridding ourselves of the fruits of oppression.

We therefore urgently and affectionately entreat all our members not to suffer themselves to admit any discouragements, either from difficulties in supplying their wants with free goods, or from objections which are always made, with more or less plausibility, to what is right; but endeavor to adhere simply to this duty, and do what is in their power. There are articles, respecting which doubts may exist; but such as are known to be, in all probability, the fruit of slavery, let us be careful to avoid, though we may have to pay a higher price for those of free origin. Free groceries are now easily obtained, and cottons may be had by applying for, when in market, or linen substituted. The sacrifice we may thus have to make, for the sake of clearing ourselves of this wrong, will, we doubt not, bring a blessing greater than that of the increase of earthly treasure.

Nor are we to overlook other ways in which we may partake of this evil, but bear our testimony against it on every hand. When we consider the nature of the iniquity of Slavery, opposed as it is to the spirit of Him, who has enjoined in

the most solemn manner our duties to him that is an-hungered, athirst, naked, a stranger, sick, and in prison; so often and so remarkably the conditon of the poor Slave; and that the Almighty, who is just and equal in all his ways, has in all ages declared by His prophets, his abhorrence of oppression, —we cannot expect that he will show partiality in our favor, nor overlook our transgressions, while we continue knowingly to strengthen the hands of the oppressor, in whatever way it may be; whether by paying the slaveholder for his cruel exactions, or countenancing by the exercise of our suffrage, those who in a direct or indirect manner continue to legalize it.

If we thus endeavor, first to purge ourselves of all participance in this wrong, and next, to influence others to do likewise, in humility and fear, actuated by the love which is enjoined towards our fellow immortal beings, and which was compared by our Saviour to the love we should feel to the Lord our God;—then, may we not expect to be made partakers in some degree, of the spiritual blessings which were pronounced by the mouth of the prophet, to those who "draw out their soul to the hungry and afflicted, who undo the heavy burdens, and let the oppressed go free."

Signed by direction of Farmington Quarterly Meeting of Friends, held at Farmington, 1st mo. 19th, 1842.

SILAS CORNELL,
SARAH M. CORNELL. Clerks.

ADDRESS OF NEW YORK YEARLY MEETING.

The Essay contained in the Records of the Meeting for Sufferings, on the subject of trafficking in, and the free use of, articles produced by the labor of slaves, was fully approved by this Meeting, and directed to be transmitted to the subordinate meetings. It is as follows:

The subject of freely using and trading in articles produced by the labor of slaves, has claimed the very serious consideration of this meeting, and under the impressions attending, we are induced to invite our beloved friends to unite with us in a careful examination of it.

That the system of slavery involves in itself a great departure from those principels of moral rectitude which the Christan Religion not only inculcates, but enjoins, is a truth readily admitted. And this being conceded, the deeply interesting inquiry is suggested, wheather by freely purchasing the produce of slave labor, we are not strengthening the hands fo the oppressor, and lending our aid in riveting the fetters upon the galled limbs of the slave?

In the early settlement of America, when there was little known of the manner in which slaves were procured in Africa,

and the purchase of them here was deemed favorable to both master and slave, Friends not only purchased and held slaves, but even engaged, to a limited extent, in the foreign slave trade. At an early period in the history of this trade, a few Friends were enlightned to see the sinfulness of it, and after long and arduous labor with their brethren, the conviction of its sinfulness so prevailed, that this traffic was relinquished. The next step in the progress of reform, was to refraim from the purchase and sale of those slaves already in the country. Our worthy forefathers, however, continued to hold their fellow men in bondage, because they had not sufficiently examined the subject in the light of Truth; for when in the lapse of time, through an increase of light, they became convinced that this practice also was wrong, they united in abolishing it.

But before this was entirely effected, there were enlightened and faithful members of our religious society, who, in consideration of the great injustice inseparably connected with the system of slavery, and also the intimate relation subsisting between slaveholders and the purchasers and consumers of the products of slave labor, were induced to believe that, as faithful and consistent advocates in the cause of universal righteousness, it was required of them to abstain from the use of articles produced by the labor of slaves. Among these, it is well known, that deeply instructed and devoted servant of Christ, JOHN WOOLMAN, occupied a prominent place. And from his day, down to the present, the same testimony has been upheld by many of our most worthy and enlihtened members. But is it not an inquiry demanding our most serious thoughtfulness, whether the advancement of this testimony, within the limits of our Society, has fully kept pace with the increase of light and knowledge; and whether our sympathy with the slave, in the long continuance of that weight of affliction, under which he is bowed down, has been so lively, and our eyes so singly directed to the pointings of duty in this matter, as to prepare us to perceive and faithfully to follow the manifestations of the Divine Will?

"The trading in," says John Woolman, "or frequent use of any produce known to be raised by those who are under such lamentable oppression, hath appeared to me to be a subject *which may yet require the more serious considerations of the humble followers of Christ the Prince of Peace.* After long and mournful exercise, I am now free to mention how things have opened in my mind, with desires, that if it please the *Lord further to open his will to any of his children in this matter, they may faithfully follow him in such manifestations.*"

The determined manner in which the slaveholder still continues to grasp his victim, and the horrors inseparably con-

nected with the foreign and the domestic slave trade, are circumstances which press this subject upon our attention, and in the most forcible manner urge us to "discuss the matter with candor and freedom."

"Customs generally approved, and opinions received by youth from their superiors, become like the natural produce of the soil, especially when they are suited to favorite inclinations; but as the judgments of God, by which the state of the soul must be tried, are without partiality, it would be the highest wisdom to forego customs and popular opinions, and try the treasure of the soul by the infallible standard, *Truth*. Christ, our holy leader, graciously continuth to open the understandings of his people, and as circumstances alter from age to age, some who are deeply baptized into a feeling of the state of things, are led by His Holy Spirit into exercises in some respects different from those which attended the faithful in foregoing ages, and from a clear convincement, they may see the relation of one thing to another, and the necessary tendency of each; and hence it may be absolutely binding upon them to desist from some parts of conduct, which some good men have been in."—*Woolman*.

Thus it was with members of our Religious Society in regard to a participation in the foreign slave trade; and again, in relation to the domestic traffic in slaves. It was thus with them, also, in regard to holding of slaves, and why should it not be so, as relates to the disuse of the products of slave labor? If we examine the connection existing between the slave *holder* and the *consumer* of the produce of the slave labor, must we not admit, that it is of a very intimate nature, and that its tendency is to support the system of slavery?

To hire a slave, and pay the wages of his labor to his master would be deemed nearly equivalent to slave holding.

If this slave toils for his master, and we purchase freely the produce of his labor, do we not contribute as effectually to the gain of the slaveholder, as in the proceding case? If another person purchases this produce for the purpose of traffic, and we buy of him for the purpose of consuming it, is not another link added to the chain, and is not the connection with the slaveholder as complete as in the first instance? It is true, that we are further removed from the scene of opprssion —and it may be that this increased distance has tended to pacify the concience, in a course that is not consistent with sound reasoning; and thus may we not have contributed too long, to encourage, by our conduct a system of oppression, the existence of which we have so sincerely lamented?

When we reflect that the precepts of the Christan religion require us to cherish a feeling of sympathy with our fellow men, in the varied difficulties and sufferings which attend

them—"to weep with those who weep"—"to remember those who are in bonds, as bound with them; and those who suffer afflictions, as being ourselves also in the body"—and think of the long series of years, during which the slave has been chained and tasked, and his sweat exacted—and how entirely those rights, which are the gifts of a beneficent Creator, bestowed alike upon all men, as blessings to sweeten life, are torn from him—is there not a pressing and solemn obligation resting upon us, carefully to examine whether we do in any way contribute to the continuance of this system of oppression?

It may be urged in favor of using the proceeds of slave labor, that if we do not use it, others will, and that our abstinence will not arrest or mitigate the evil, and therefore we may innocently derive from it a good to ourselves. But might not an argument like this have been urged with equal fitness, by our Friends formerly, in favor of their participation in slavery and the slave trade?

It may be said, that in refusing to use the produce of slave labor we adopt a compulsory measure, and undertake to coerce the slaveholder to liberate his slaves—that the principle of abstinence, if carried out, would compel many persons to leave their accustomed employments—that trade itself would be subjected to a convulsion, the extent of which cannot be foreseen—that the slaveholder, deprived of his income by our abstinence, would be unable to provide for the maintenance of his slaves, and that increased sufferings and perhaps starvation would be the consequence.

When arguments like these are balanced against the positive and monstrous evils of slavery, to which they tend to serve as props, and we for a moment suppose ourselves in the condition of the enslaved, and then bring those arguments to that moral test of right in our own bosoms, which is always in perfect agreement with the precept enjoined by our holy Redeemer, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them," does not the conviction fasten upon us, that such arguments are too light to sustain a system by which millions of our fellow men are deprived of those inalienable rights, which are the gifts of God, bestowed alike upon all!

Let us trace out the probable consequences of declining the use of the products of slave labor. A considerable number of persons refusing the use of such produce, would at once create a demand for similar articles produced by free labor. In the commencement, the supply of such produce would not be fully equal to the demand, and some advance in the price might be expected. This would stimulate to increased production, and the quantity of such goods would increase.

While the supply was thus enlarging, may we not hope that the example of those who conscientiously declined to participate in the fruits of slave labor, would work conviction in the minds of others, and that the number would increase! The slaveholders, seeing the progress of a more elevated public sentiment, might be induced to meet the change—not by starving their miserable slaves, but by changing their condition from "chattles to men." This change would be commenced, doubtless, by a few of the most enlightened slaveholders, who perceiving that there was really an honest testimony abroad against slavery, which refused all participation in its fruits, might enter themselves into the spirit of the reform, and meet the sentiment in its fulness.

Thus the impression at first would be made on the outskirts of slavery. And while the demand for the produce of free labor was gradually increasing, and preparation for supplying the demand was constantly enlarging, a decided impression would be made on the market for slave goods. Under a decaying demand for such goods, no prudent slaveholder would add to the number of his slaves. The slave merchant would be less disposed to prosecute his illegal and hazardous enterprize. The inducement to rear slaves to supply the internal traffic would be diminished, and the whole system of slavery would be weakened,

Nor should the difficulties which are anticipated deter us! There is a forse in united efforts, especially when enlisted in the cause of virtue, which, if they are discreetly and perseveringly conducted, can achieve wonders. It is true, that at the present time, the products of slavery are so intertwined with our varied occupations and wants, that we scarce can see how to disengage ourselves from them, yet if our attention be singly fixed upon the pointings of Truth, in reference to this subject, we may reasonably trust, that it will guide us rightly, and prepare our way before us. In ancient days, when the progress of a people, who were journeying by divine direction, was obstructed by a river which spread its breadth in their way, they were required to advance untill the soles of their feet pressed the margin of the stream—and thus standing, the retreating waters gave way before them, and they passed over dry shod. If, following this example, we proceed as far as we can, and there stand, willing to advance if a way can be discovered, all past experience unites in bearing its testimony in favor of the belief, that little by little, the difficulties will yield, until the whole are surmounted.

Some sacrifice of interest would be required, and some personal indulgence, for a time, must be dispensed with. But it is by no means a new thing, that sacrifice should be required

for the promotion of the cause of Truth and Righteousness in the earth. Indeed, if we look back on the past, will it not appear that sacrifice has been the price at which reformation in the world has been carried forward? It has been the lot of our religious society to participate largely in trials of this kind, nor is it easy to conceive on what ground we can expect to be excused from them, until Righteousness be established in the earth, unless, indeed, it should be for the mournful reason, that we have departed from our proper position in the militant Church. In the consideration of this matter, our minds have been seriously affected. We wish not to promote a feverish exitement in relation to this great subject, but we desire that all may unite in calmly and carefully considering it. If we admit the correctness of the poisition that "*it is the market for Slave produce which makes Slavery*," we must feel that it is a serious matter to be customers in this market. The circumstance of long usage may be presented as a plea in favor of the continuance of the use. But the subject of inquiry is, wheather a system of injustice and oppression, has not been strengthened by this long usage! May we consider the matter with that seriousness and candor which the case justly calls for! "If our hearts are softened and expanded by the love of God, we shall be prepared to view these oppressed people, as children of the same Almighty Father, equally with ourselves the objects of His divine regard, and of that salvation which comes by Jesus Christ; and thus be enabled to enter into a lively feeling of the miseries and hardships they endure; to put our souls in their souls' stead, and in singleness of heart to follow every opening of duty in their behalf, whatever sacrifice it may cost us, either of worldly treasure or personal comfort."

Taken from the Minutes,

RICHARD MOTT, Cleark.

ENOCH HARRIS, PR.